



## LILT NEWSLETTER

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### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, some of our members took their initial steps into their first year of LOTE teaching, while others continue a fulfilling career as a LOTE professional. LILT's promise is to be there for all of our LOTE teachers on Long Island, whether they are at the initial or more experienced stages of teaching. LILT hopes to infuse, through its many programs, the zest needed by all LOTE teachers to bring languages to life with enthusiasm and innovation for our students. The Executive Board and I wish you a good start to the year. We will be facing many challenges with the elimination of the LOTE state exams. This is the year to make your students shine and to bring attention to your department. Get your students involved in LILT's Student Foreign Language Competition and Poster Contest. Celebrate Foreign Language Week like you've never celebrated it before! We can't expect our students to go the extra mile unless we are willing to do so ourselves.

A nice way to kick off the school year is by attending our Fall General Membership Meeting on October 12. As always there will be a gift for all who attend, and a Chinese Auction of *Teacher Baskets*. Please bring along a colleague, introduce yourself to me, mingle with colleagues, and enjoy some social time. Please inform **Janet Loehr**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, ([jloehr@liltfl.org](mailto:jloehr@liltfl.org)) as soon as possible about any LILT member, of whom we were not previously aware, who retired after LILT's Spring Membership Meeting was held. LILT wishes to honor those retirees at the Fall General Membership Meeting. To be honored, a retiree should meet the constitutional requirement of a minimum of three current consecutive years of membership through this year.

The 2011 LILT Annual Conference Committee has worked all summer to produce what promises to be another highly professional and successful conference entitled: *Languages Build Futures*, to be held on Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at SUNY College at Old Westbury. **Please note, this date is NOT during Veteran's Day weekend.** Once again, for this year's conference, **THERE IS NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE on the day of the conference. ALL attendees must pre-register.** One can choose to

register and pay conference fees online (preferred) on our website at: [WWW.LITLFL.ORG](http://WWW.LITLFL.ORG), or register by mail. Please register early! Just as in the past two years, you will receive an e-mail registration confirmation when your registration is completed.

In September, when welcoming any new department members, please inform them about the many LILT activities, events and opportunities for professional development our organization provides, and encourage them to join. Not only does LILT provide activities for professional growth, but there are also many *LILT* ways of honoring and rewarding colleagues and students via LILT's scholarship, awards and grant opportunities. Information on all of the above can be found on our website: [www.liltfl.org](http://www.liltfl.org). Explore the possibilities!

Are you holding a Professional Certificate? Do you need to complete 175 hours of Professional Development every five years? Don't have your certificate revoked! LILT offers many professional development opportunities for which you can accumulate those much needed hours: attend LILT's Annual Conference in November, enroll in LILT Professional Development workshops held in February, March or April, and/or apply to give a LILT Professional Development workshop. Our fees are extremely reasonable, so if you are not sure how you will accumulate those hours, start with us. See how quickly the hours add up while gaining valuable information.

At a time when the economy has adversely affected the state of LOTE education on Long Island, it is essential we remain advocates for foreign languages and find ways to promote them.

Sincerely wishing you a successful, pleasant and rewarding school year,

*Michele R. Ortiz*

### **CONGRATULATIONS**

To **Dolores Clarke**, **Anita Ekstam**, **Dr. Patricia Lennon-Murphy** and **Linda Stack** on their June retirements.

To **Julio Batista** on the publication of his book of poetry,

*Bijao*. It is a collection of contemporary poems with social, political and personal themes written during his many years of living and traveling in Latin America, Spain and the United States. Contact Julio Batista at [juliobatista@hotmail.com](mailto:juliobatista@hotmail.com) for more information.

To **Dr. Janet Lisy-Picataggio** on her October retirement.

### **CORRECTION**

In the April 2011 *LILT Newsletter* article on *Teachers Helping Teachers, Integrating Contemporary Algerian R & B Music In the Classroom*, the complete author's name was missing. The credits should have read: Lorraine Sabio, Locust Valley Central School District. The editor deeply regrets this omission.

### **AIAE**

The Association of Italian American Educators is offering a 2010 Educators' Fellowship Award of \$1,000 to teachers of Italian attending a credit bearing Study Abroad Program in Italy. For more information kindly contact: Irma Evangelista at [ilea123@yahoo.com](mailto:ilea123@yahoo.com).

### **ITALIAN CLASSES**

The Center for Italian Studies at Stony Brook University will be offering Italian classes for the community in the fall and spring at John Glenn HS (Elwood). For more information kindly call (631) 632-7444 or go to [dseverino@italianstudies.org](mailto:dseverino@italianstudies.org).

### **U.S. LAGGING IN USING TECHNOLOGY, STUDY SHOWS**

The United States continues to lag other nations in its use of computing and communications technology, according to an annual study issued Tuesday by the World Economic Forum. For the second consecutive year, the United States finished fifth in the study's comparison of 138 countries that make up 98.8 percent of the world's total gross domestic product. Sweden was first, followed by Singapore, Finland and Switzerland.

These rankings, for 2010, are based on an index of 71 economic and social indicators, as diverse as new patents, mobile phone subscriptions and availability of venture capital.

The annual reports began in 2001, after the collapse of the Internet bubble. The World Economic Forum, based in Davos, Switzerland, holds that technological progress is the principal driver of innovation, productivity and efficiency. "What we are trying to address," said a co-author of the study, Soumitra Dutta, a professor of Information Systems at the Insead business school, "is what is the capability and what is the level of success of a nation to benefit from the network economy?"

The study showed the rapid progress of the so-called Asian Tigers, whose governments have invested heavily in technology. Besides Singapore, Taiwan was ranked 6th, South Korea 10th and Hong Kong 12th. Japan was 19th. China ranked 36th and India 48th, falling five

places from 2009. Rounding out the large developing BRIC countries — Brazil, Russia, India and China — Brazil was 56th and Russia 77th.

The country making the most progress in 2010 was Indonesia, which jumped 14 places to 53rd — in part because of high educational standards and in part because of the importance the government has placed on information and communications technology. Among Western nations, Canada was 8th, Norway 9th, Germany 13th, Britain 15th and France 20th. The two lowest countries were Burundi and Chad.

The United States was uneven on many measures that affect economic competitiveness. For example, it ranked 76th in the rate of mobile phone subscriptions, 48th in low-cost access to business phone lines and 24th in percentage of households with a personal computer — behind Bahrain, Singapore and Brunei, among others. Professor Dutta said the United States ranked 52nd in math and science education.

The World Economic Forum has created an ambitious website, [weforum.org/tgt](http://weforum.org/tgt), to display the findings, including a visualization tool useful for exploring the data.

*Reprinted from The New York Times, April 12, 2011*

### **SHANGHAI IS TRYING TO UNTANGLE THE MANGLED ENGLISH OF CHINGLISH**

SHANGHAI — For English speakers with subpar Chinese skills, daily life in China offers a confounding array of choices. At banks, there are machines for "cash withdrawing" and "cash recycling." The menus of local restaurants might present such delectables as "fried enema," "monolithic tree mushroom stem squid" and a mysterious thirst-quencher known as "The Jew's Ear Juice."

Those who have had a bit too much monolithic tree mushroom stem squid could find themselves requiring roomier attire: extra-large sizes sometimes come in "fatso" or "lard bucket" categories. These and other fashions can be had at the clothing chain known as Scat.

Go ahead and snicker, by the opening of the Expo 2010 in Shanghai, drawing more than 70 million visitors over its six-month run, these and other uniquely Chinese maladaptations of the English language were supposed to have been largely excised. Well, that at least is what the Shanghai Commission for the Management of Language Use has been trying to accomplish during the past two years. Fortified by an army of 600 volunteers and a politburo of adroit English speakers, the commission has fixed more than 10,000 public signs (farewell "Teliot" and "urine district"), rewritten English-language historical placards and helped hundreds of restaurants recast offerings.

The campaign is partly modeled on Beijing's herculean effort to clean up English signage for the 2008 Summer Olympics, which led to the replacement of 400,000 street

signs, 1,300 restaurant menus and such exemplars of impropriety as the Dongda Anus Hospital — now known as the Dongda Proctology Hospital. Gone, too, is Racist Park, a cultural attraction that has since been rechristened Minorities Park.

“The purpose of signage is to be useful, not to be amusing,” said Zhao Huimin, the former Chinese ambassador to the United States who, as director general of the capital’s Foreign Affairs Office, has been leading the fight for linguistic standardization and sobriety. But while the war on mangled English may be considered a signature achievement of government officials, aficionados of what is known as Chinglish are wringing their hands in despair.

Oliver Lutz Radtke, a former German radio reporter who may well be the world’s foremost authority on Chinglish, said he believed that China should embrace the fanciful melding of English and Chinese as the hallmark of a dynamic, living language. As he sees it, Chinglish is an endangered species that deserves preservation. “If you standardize all these signs, you not only take away the little giggle you get while strolling in the park but you lose a window into the Chinese mind,” said Mr. Radtke, who is the author of a pair of picture books that feature

giggle-worthy Chinglish signs in their natural habitat. Lest anyone think it is all about laughs, Mr. Radtke is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Chinglish at the University of Heidelberg.

Still, the enemies of Chinglish say the laughter it elicits is humiliating. Wang Xiaoming, an English scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, painfully recalls the guffaws that erupted among her foreign-born colleagues as they flipped through a photographic collection of poorly written signs. “They didn’t mean to insult me but I couldn’t help but feel uncomfortable,” said Ms. Wang, who has since become one of Beijing’s leading Chinglish slayers.

Those who study the roots of Chinglish say many examples can be traced to laziness and a flawed but wildly popular translation software. Victor H. Mair, a professor of Chinese at the University of Pennsylvania, said the computerized dictionary, Jingshan Ciba, had led to sexually oriented vulgarities identifying dried produce in Chinese supermarkets and the regrettable “fried enema” menu selection that should have been rendered as “fried sausage.” Although improved translation software and a growing zeal for grammatically unassailable English has slowed the output of new Chinglishisms, Mr. Mair said he still received about five new examples a day from people who knew he was good at deciphering what went wrong. “If someone

would pay me to do it, I’d spend my life studying these things,” he said.

Among those getting paid to wrestle with Chinglish is Jeffrey Yao, an English translator and teacher at the Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation in Shanghai who is leading the sign exorcism. But even as he eradicates the most egregious examples by government fiat — businesses dare not ignore the commission’s suggested fixes — he has mixed feelings, noting that although some Chinglish phrases sound awkward to Western ears, they can be refreshingly lyrical. “Some of it tends to be expressive, even elegant,” he said, shuffling through an online catalog of signs that were submitted by the volunteers who prowled Shanghai with digital cameras. “They provide a window into how we Chinese think about language.” He offered the following example: While park signs in the West exhort people to “Keep Off the Grass,” Chinese versions tend to anthropomorphize nature as a way to gently engage the stomping masses. Hence, such admonishments as “The Little Grass Is Sleeping. Please Don’t Disturb It” or “Don’t Hurt Me. I Am Afraid of Pain.”

Mr. Yao read off the Chinese equivalents as if savoring a Shakespearean sonnet. “How lovely,” he said with a

sigh. He pointed out that this linguistic mentality helped create such expressions as “long time no see,” a word-for-word translation of a Chinese expression that became a mainstay of spoken English. But Mr. Yao, who spent nearly two decades working as

a translator in Canada, has his limits. He showed a sign from a park designed to provide visitors with the rules for entry, which include prohibitions on washing, “scavenging,” clothes drying and public defecation, all of it rendered in unintelligible — and in the case of the last item — rather salty English. The sign ended with this humdinger: “Because if the tourist does not obey the staff to manage or contrary holds, Does, all consequences are proud.”

Even though he had had the sign corrected recently, Mr. Yao could not help but shake his head in disgust at the memory. And he was irritated to find that a raft of troublesome sign verbiage had slipped past the commission as the expo approached, including a cafeteria sign that read, “The tableware reclaims a place.” (Translation: drop off dirty dishes here.) “Some Chinglish expressions are nice, but we are not translating literature here,” he said. “I want to see people nodding that they understand the message on these signs. I don’t want to see them laughing.”

*Reprinted from The New York Times, May 2, 2010*

## FALL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2011

HOLIDAY INN, PLAINVIEW

More information will be forthcoming via an e-mail update and the U.S. mail.

## **LANGUAGE CUTS ENDANGER U.S.**

On May 1, after more than a decade, the search for Osama bin Laden came to an end. It took patience and perseverance. And it took not only military prowess, but also intelligence that depended on a solid understanding of that region of the world and capabilities in a number of foreign languages that are not widely known in the United States.

Our years of work in diplomacy and national security have made very clear to both of us the critical need to maintain and expand the cadre of Americans who have studied the history and politics of countries who affect our well-being. Specifically, the United States' ability to both confront challenges and exploit opportunities relies heavily on Americans being able to understand and speak less commonly taught languages. Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Pashto, Farsi and Swahili are of obvious importance to addressing prominent challenges facing us today, but the need is not limited to those.

We believe that a grievous last-minute mistake was made when funding for International Education and Foreign Language Studies was cut for this fiscal year. In the context of billions and even trillions of cuts being discussed, a \$50 million reduction sounds insignificant. But this particular \$50 million cut from the Department of Education's budget amounted to a 40% reduction in the relatively small account that supports these programs at higher education institutions across the U.S. This is a dramatic cut that will have long-lasting and serious consequences — it not only threatens the nation's diplomatic, intelligence, and national security capacities, but also our ability to maximize our competitiveness in global markets. This cut was a last-minute decision made with the specter of a government shutdown hanging over it. This cut is one that our national interests demand be reversed before the damage is too great. Future budget decisions regarding international education efforts need to be made in light of the documented shortages of language-proficient workers that hinder the work of critical federal agencies.

In 2002, the Government Accountability Office (at the time, known as the General Accounting Office), reviewed the use of foreign language skills at the U.S. Army, the State Department, the Foreign Commercial Service of the Department of Commerce, and the FBI, and reported significant and troubling shortfalls, many of them "in hard-to-learn languages from the Middle East and Asia." The report noted that "agency officials stated that these shortfalls have adversely affected agency operations and hindered U.S. military, law enforcement, intelligence, counterterrorism and diplomatic efforts." The report also cited diplomatic and intelligence officials' specific comments about the shortages having "weakened the fight against international terrorism and drug trafficking."

While federal agencies are indeed working to meet their language needs, they are chasing a moving target as

regions posing threats evolve, as do areas of opportunity. Furthermore, the 2002 GAO report's point that technology advances "allow the collection of growing amounts of information" is an even greater factor today.

The modest funding for International Education and Foreign Language Studies is vital to maintaining and enhancing our critical workforce needs. The institutional capacity on university campuses across the nation that exists today has taken decades to build and would be impossible to easily recapture once these programs are slashed. These cuts threaten that capacity. Former students in programs supported by this funding have gone on to distinguished careers in the U.S. military, in various intelligence agencies, and in our diplomatic corps. Among those whose educations have benefited from these programs are former secretary of Defense Robert Gates, James Collins, former U.S. ambassador to Russia, and former representative David Obey. Others are defense attaches in U.S. embassies around the world, national intelligence officers and leaders in international organizations and NGOs, as well as private sector companies representing the United States abroad.

Today, only 5% of post-secondary students in the U.S. who are studying foreign languages are enrolled in courses on non-European languages despite the fact that 85% of the world's population speaks those other languages. When 18 to 24 year olds were surveyed by National Geographic five years ago, the magazine documented an abysmal grasp of basic world geography. In order to work effectively with the world's fastest-growing economies, as well as the countries with the highest populations of young people and those that present the greatest security challenges to the U.S. today, we must ensure that we expand the numbers of Americans who understand these regions and speak their languages.

As President Dwight Eisenhower said when he signed the National Defense Education Act in 1958, this initiative "will do much to strengthen our American system of education so that it can meet the broad and increasing demands imposed upon it by the considerations of basic national security." What was true during the Cold War is more critical in today's global society, and demands that we restore funding to our international education programs.

(This article was written by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Senator Chuck Hagel, who are professors at Georgetown University.)

*Reprinted from USA Today, July 19, 2011. Submitted by Nancy Russo-Rumore, Emerita.*

*I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigrees of nations. Samuel Johnson, English lexicographer (1709-1784)*

## SPOTLIGHT ON JOSEPHINE SANTI



Josephine (Giuseppina) Santi teaches Italian at Connetquot High School in Bohemia, and is known for her hard work and dedication to foreign language instruction. She grew up on Long Island to parents who were born in Italy. Almost

every summer they would return to Sicily and visit their families, where Josephine's passion grew for Italian, where she learned all about working on a farm, and how their way of life seemed to be so different than hers on Long Island. She equally loved going back to school in September and telling her classmates about her adventures, and thus realized she wanted to share and teach Italian culture to others. She then decided to pursue studies in education and Italian.

While attending SUNY Binghamton, Josephine decided to study abroad in Trent in order to better master Italian. Since Trent is in northern Italy, this provided her an entirely different perspective on Italian culture and language. After studying abroad for two semesters, Josephine returned to Binghamton and created an Italian Club, where students were able to meet and share their passion for Italian. They put on plays for the community, hosted Italian movie nights, and attended operas together. Josephine received two undergraduate awards: Binghamton's and Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence. While there she was given the opportunity to become a Language Resource Specialist and teach two courses at the university for students wishing to practice their Italian more in the classroom.

Before pursuing her Masters in Education, Josephine decided to live in Italy for three years and teach English. She obtained her CELTA certificate and taught at both the public and private schools. During this time, she was able to better understand the Italian way of life, which included passing her road test to get her Italian driving license, a story which she also loves to share with her students.

In 2008 Josephine started working as an Italian teacher in the Connetquot School District, where she uses both the SMART Board and Promethean Board, which allow her to create lessons that are both interactive and appealing to students. She designs virtual field trips for students through PowerPoint and takes them through the different regions of Italy by also using GoogleMaps, Italy360.it, and Arounder.com. She shows students realia, pictures and videos of herself while visiting those different places. This helps students feel they are tourists in the classroom. In Josephine's lessons both language and culture are presented in the classroom through authentic realia, songs, stories, interactive activities, and of course food! Students have tasted *struffoli* and *panettone* before Christmas, St. Joseph's Day *zeppole*, and *le chiacchiere* during Carnevale.

During the Food Unit students recreate restaurant scenes, prepare their favorite foods, create posters displaying ingredients, and act out parts of the waiter and diner. These posters are displayed in front of the classroom and act as oversized menus for the students.

Josephine uses language that is authentic, so Italian commercials and short video clips often provide context for different language and grammar points she presents to the students. Students practice their Italian through Italian songs by past and present artists. Josephine uses songs not only to teach grammatical points, but also culture, vocabulary, and pronunciation. She has them memorize certain phrases from songs they can later use in other contexts, or use to understand further grammatical points. Towards the end of the year, Josephine hosts a Karaoke Day where students are able to sing all of their favorite Italian songs.

What motivates Josephine to be an excellent teacher? When she sees her students connecting with what they've learned in her class to another subject, and to see their faces light up while telling her, that inspires her to reach out to them more, to help them understand more connections between Italian and other subjects. When they also rush into class with a smile on their faces, telling her how they actually had to use Italian outside of the classroom and were able to do so well, this gives her more motivation to teach them Italian in a way that can be used in everyday situations.

One important idea Josephine has learned while living in Italy is the importance of accepting other cultures. She was able to see the difference and stereotypes between northern and southern Italy. Her goal is to turn students away from any of these stereotypes, and to teach them to understand other cultures instead of criticizing them.

*Submitted by Riccardo Mancuso, North Country Road Middle School (Miller Place)*

*The highest result of education is tolerance. Helen Keller, author and lecturer (1880-1968)*

### **THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DILEMMA: SÍ OR OUI?**

Our household is locked in battle over a seemingly mindless decision: Should our middle schooler take Spanish or French next year when the foreign-language program kicks in for his grade level? At first glance, it should be easy enough to decide – only two choices, really (actually three if you add “don't take a language” to the options), but not so fast, amigos. My spouse initially questioned whether to even encourage the foreign-language route. Why push for extra homework, more vocabulary, the stresses of a complex subject, layered onto an already difficult school and activities load?

But for me, “no languages” isn't an option. Growing up, most everyone I knew signed up for a foreign language in middle school. It was either that or you took something like... basket weaving. Ok, I'm being snide. But let's face it – when you live in a diverse, multicultural, bedroom

community to the nation's capital, taking a foreign language is generally a given. As a child of immigrants, I grew up bilingually and took another language in the Maryland middle and high school levels with nary a problem. In fact, I feel I benefitted greatly from it. And I'm not alone in that opinion. Scores of studies and articles tout the advantages of foreign language studies, especially at a young age. Peruse the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' website and you'll find 11 studies alone linking foreign-language learning and higher academic achievement, including better SAT scores, memory skills, cognitive abilities and so on.

Interestingly, learning a foreign language makes you more proficient in your native tongue. Try this little exercise: Ask a typical middle schooler to conjugate a verb, any verb. Then ask a student of a foreign language. The first might know what you're talking about, but the latter definitely will as that's the backbone of any foreign language program.

We've heard the admonitions about being behind other countries before, but they bear mentioning again. "Europe and Asia require their students to take numerous language courses and achieve high levels of proficiency. How can U.S. students compete effectively if they don't have the same language tools?" notes Ruta Couet, President of the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. Couet pointed me toward a string of other findings, including data from a January 2011 Education Week article indicating 21 European Union countries require nine years of language study. Add to the mix immigration, globalization, interweaving world economies, overseas outsourcing, and frankly, even terrorism, and these beg for a generation that's well-versed in other cultures, customs, and, yes, languages. Even the CIA has delved into the fray — in December 2010 director Leon Panetta urged the American education system to better commit to mastering foreign languages, saying it's not something "simply nice to have," rather it's "crucial."

Of course, committing to foreign language studies is harder than it sounds, whether it's at the family, local, state or national level. Certainly the most obvious counter-argument to pushing for second language learning is that English is the lingua franca of the world. Most travelers will tell you they can get by just fine as an English-only speaker, pretty much anywhere. Sure, but what's being lost during those broken conversations and international hand gestures? "I think monolinguals don't realize the doors that are opened [with a second language]," says Couet. Accuracy, implications, perceptions, details and nuances are, indeed, lost in translation. True fluency in a second language is critical for business negotiators, law enforcement officials and medical professionals, to name a few, she adds.

The other challenge is attaining that fluency. Shocker:

Your child will not become conversant during the average two years of high school Spanish. Couet and her counterparts emphasize the sequence of instruction (i.e., as soon as it's available, take a language and stick with it as long as possible). "Language is a function of time," she explains, and only time put into the language will contribute to any level of proficiency. Indeed, students themselves seem to get that. "Studying a language in school is not the same as being in the culture," concurs Brielle Pitney, a 16-year Howard County junior who is into her fifth year of Spanish, including two years in middle and three in high school. "The fact that there are breaks over the summer, you have to re-learn a lot at the beginning of every year," she adds. She ranks herself as a "basic" speaker: understanding the language better than being able to speak it. Nevertheless, she says the "investment of time" is worth it, whether it's to get by in another country, obtain advanced placement credit in her senior year, or set herself apart on college applications.

Maryland public high schools do even better. A little more than half of all enrolled students participated in a foreign language last year. Plus, the offerings increase from the traditional French and Spanish, with Arabic, Greek, Latin, German and Japanese scattered throughout the state. Overall, Maryland's foreign-language efforts appear solid, even though it's hard to compare state-to-state figures since each state tracks different enrollment/language numbers. Wisconsin, for example, ranks highest for overall foreign language programs, but that's based on students in grades 6-12 only; New York is exceptional with a 29.59 percent foreign-language enrollment across all grade levels, Spinnato says.

Like all education dilemmas, the issue is the lack of consistency from teacher-to-teacher, school-to-school, county-to-county and state-to-state. My county of residence, Howard, tops the figures with a whopping 67.9 percent of total students enrolled in a world language in 2009-2010. Great, right? But wait, out of 21,316 enrolled elementary school students, not one took a language because the county doesn't offer an elementary language program during the school day. "As you can tell by looking [at the numbers], we have a great deal of students at the high school level ... Where we need improvement is in elementary... If we can ratchet our elementary [world-language programs]... we'll be number one in world languages too," says Spinnato.

The trick is to expand beyond a handful of elementary school magnet programs with immersion classes; encourage more creative and successful after school language classes offered by independent companies; and diversify the number of foreign language offerings at the middle and high school levels. "This is something that does have a price tag," Spinnato says.

# PROFESSIONAL CALENDAR

2011

Sep. 17	<i>Los Caprichos</i> of Goya and Cardillo, Nassau County Museum of Art (through Nov. 27)		
Sep. 25	<i>Concorso d'Eleganza VI</i> , show of Italian cars, Stony Brook University, 10 AM-1 PM	<b>FEB.</b>	Hall, Stony Brook University, \$38/person <b>LILT Professional Development Workshops begin</b>
<b>Oct. 12</b>	<b>LILT General Membership Meeting, Holiday Inn, Plainview</b>	<b>Mar. 1</b>	<b>Deadline for LILT Student Foreign Language Competition submissions</b>
Oct.13-15	150 <sup>th</sup> Celebration of Italy's Unification, Stony Brook University	Mar. 7-11	World Language Week
Oct.14-16	NYSAFLT Annual Conference, Rochester	<b>Mar. TBA</b>	<b>LILT Poster Contest deadline</b>
<b>Nov. 5</b>	<b>LILT Annual Conference, SUNY College at Old Westbury</b>	<b>Mar. 31</b>	<b>Deadline for LILT Plaque orders</b>
<b>Nov. 17</b>	<b>LILT Field Trip</b> (concert, museum, & lunch)	<b>APR.</b>	<b>LILT Professional Development Workshops end</b>
Nov.18-20	ACTFL, ATTG & AATI Annual Conferences, Denver	Apr.TBA	NECTF Conference, Baltimore
		<b>Apr. 15</b>	<b>Deadline for Awards, Grants and Stipends</b>
		<b>May TBA</b>	<b>LILT Spring General Membership Meeting</b> (Suffolk County)
		Jul. 6-9	ATTF Convention, Montréal
		Jul. 6-9	AATSP Conference, Washington, DC

2012

Jan. 29 Chucho Valdes & the Afro-Cuban Messengers, 7 PM, Staller Center Recital

Case in point: Howard County's Board of Education just approved its 2012 operating budget request in February of \$681 million, which includes "planning money for an elementary World Language Program."

Even if my family weren't already convinced about pursuing a language, one final fact did the trick. Maryland high school graduation requirements mandate two credits of foreign-language study (or a complex matrix of other non-language alternatives). Many colleges subsequently require two years of foreign language study for admission, according to the College Board. The University of Maryland does. Most Ivy League schools require four years and prefer it in the same language to demonstrate proficiency and continuity. Point taken.

So, back to the original dilemma: French or Spanish? As parents, we approached it from the practical perspective, rooting for the language that's most spoken in our area. According to the 2010 Census Bureau figures, Hispanics make up 7.2 percent of the Howard County population and 15.8 percent of the state of Maryland. Over the last 10 years, Maryland's largest population increase was in the Hispanic category, to 241,715 people or a whopping growth of 106.5 percent. Then it's *se habla español!* But wait. Researching the world's most highly spoken languages altered our perspective on the stats. Depending on what information you're looking at, the top four slots alternate amongst Mandarin Chinese, English, Hindi and Spanish. Though French never makes it to the top of these lists, it ranks highest in the category of "secondary speakers," or people who speak it as a second language. And a prominent and oft-quoted 1997 study by George Weber ranked the most "influential" languages worldwide based on a complex calculation of

several factors as:

1. English, 2. French, 3. Spanish, 4. Russian, 5. Arabic  
Hmm, maybe French trumps Spanish then? "We want students to have an international perspective and the best way is to learn another language. In my opinion, it doesn't matter which language it is, but that they get that cross-cultural perspective," says Spinnato. Ultimately, it appears that it doesn't matter which language my middle schooler pursues, rather, it needs to be one he sticks with and something he's interested in: "I think if we leave it in the academic arena, that's been the problem," says Couet. "We have to show students the practical applications of languages... We've been teaching languages in a very topical fashion rather than connecting it to real use."

Or, as my 15-year-old nephew, Gianni Damaia, a Sarasota freshman with three years of Spanish already under his belt, so aptly put it: "Unless the teacher is physically abusing them, just get the credits in foreign language and move on. Besides, there are no better teachers [of other languages] than the members in our family. That ought to strike a passion in them." Touché.

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*Thank you to Adrienne Greenbaum, Riccardo Mancuso, Nancy Russo-Rumore, Ron Taub, Anahí Walton-Schafer for proofreading this edition.*

*All I ask is this: Do something. Try something. Speaking out, showing up, writing a letter, a check, a strongly worded e-mail. Pick a cause -- there are few unworthy ones. And nudge yourself past the brink of tacit support to action. Once a month, once a year, or just once. -Joss Whedon, writer and film director (b. 1964)*



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